

Cradle

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Furniture

Curios and Relics

Furniture

Cradle

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Springfield, Ill.
April 29, 1937

Mr. L.A. Warren,
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Dear Mr. Warren: Thank you so much for your letter of April 27th. and copies of Lincoln Lore, which I appreciate very much and will study carefully, as Abraham Lincoln must be studied. I am glad, also, that you have placed my name on your mailing list. Thank you.

Glancing over the copies of Lincoln Lore, the first copy, I noticed the name of Margaret O'Herron, who has a copy of Lincoln's Gettysburg address, which she claims to be an original. I have taken the trouble to tell you what I know about this O'Herron woman, whom I believe to be a big fraud; that she has her nerve to continue to use the name of Abraham Lincoln, when she was exposed in Wichita, in the fall of 1927. I have no faith in whatever she might offer as a Lincoln relic.

Again I thank you.

Sincerely,

O. R. Griffith
1404 S. Walnut St.,
Springfield, Ill.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S CRADLE

The fall of 1927 there came to Wichita, Kansas, a woman who claimed she had the cradle that was Abraham Lincoln's, when he was a baby. It was on exhibition at one of the hotels, and I was anxious to see it. One afternoon I called to see it, and there met Margaret O'Herron, the owner of the cradle. She had it on exhibition in the office of the hotel, together with a picture of Lincoln and a huge brass key that, she claimed, was the key to the "cabin in which Lincoln was born!" It all sounded mighty fishy to me. In the first place, the cradle was satin finished and had never rocked one so lowly born as Abraham Lincoln, who was destined to become the 16th President of the United States, die a martyr's death and become the best beloved of any man in history. Besides, whoever heard of a key that locked a cabin door?

This O'Herron woman was putting something over on the public. Nevertheless, I paid \$2 for a copy of the picture and made an effort to get the history of the cradle, and this is what she gave me, together with copies of telegrams and a clipping taken from the Springfield Journal, giving the name of the photographer, who took the picture:

The year of 1927 was a year after the death of Robert Todd Lincoln, from whom, she claimed, she received the cradle, which Lincoln left to her father, his friend, having promised it to him(O'Herron), when they met in a little town in Illinois and they started an argument, that ended in Lincoln willing O'Herron the cradle in which he was rocked when a baby(haven't my notes at hand). O'Herron was dead and the cradle was given to her mother, who premitted her to exhibit it, and she was in Wichita to help the Red Cross raise money for the tornado suffers of St.Louis.

A newspaper of Wichita, the Beacon, didn't believe her story and

made an investigation, proving her story to be false. The hotel had given her a room free of charge; but when the Beacon exposed her, they asked her to vacate the room.

The day following our first meeting, she was at our house for dinner and gave me all the information she had concocted about the cradle and old cabin key. A few days later she came out one morning and asked for a cup of tea. She stayed for lunch and stood for a snapshot.

Four years later, the summer of 1931, while living in Denver, the Denver Post announced that there were relics of Abraham Lincoln, in the office of the Post, and asked everybody to come and see them. Of course I was one of the crowd; but I took with me proof that Margaret O'Herron, owner of the relics, was not to be taken seriously. I saw and had a talk with the editor of the Post, who gave me her address, as I wanted to confront her, and asked me to call him up, after I had called her up, which I did; but she wasn't at the address and I never met her again.

Two years later I noticed in the Post that Margaret O'Herron had for sale an original copy of Lincoln's Gettysburg speech. Among my Lincoln papers I have this clipping, together with other clippings and material about this O'Herron woman's Lincoln relics. She was then at her home in Illinois, where I addressed her, giving the name of David Duval (Duval being the name of my mother), as I was quite certain she hadn't forgotten my name. She failed to answer my letter. Of course the Lincoln Gettysburg address was spurious. No doubt it is, as you say (Lincoln Lore, Oct. 3, 1932), that the "copy of the O'Herron manuscript appears very much like the copies of the address dis-

tributed freely by the thousands over a period of a great many years by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company."

This is interesting to me; for I have made a study of the "Lincoln relics," obtaining photographs when possible, until I have collected enough for a book. Nevertheless, I failed to get a copy of the Lincoln N. L. I. Company's Gettysburg address, of which I have material enough for a book, with copies of many of the addresses.

It is as W.H.Barton once said, that Lincoln material would never give out, because he is an interesting subject to write about. During the year of 1931 I wrote a long article and offered it to many papers; but I have only seen one copy, sent me by the editor of The Warrenton (Virginia) Democrat, who published it. In a way I denounced Gen. C.A. de Saussure, commander-in-chief of The United Confederate Veterans, when he refused an invitation to attend the celebration at Hodgenville, Oct. 1931, ~~where~~ de Saussure (a very old man, if living) declared that: "Of all the characters before the world, Mr. Lincoln is easily among those whom I would least wish my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to follow or emulate."

His answer aroused my indignation; so that I wrote a long article, which brought a caustic reply from a subscriber of the paper. This copy the editor also sent me. This copy I made no attempt to answer; but it lead to much anti-Lincoln literature, showing how, to this day, the people of the South hate Abraham Lincoln. Yet I wasn't surprised; for I have toured the South a number of time, gathering magazine and newspaper material, when I was called a "foreigner."

V.R.Griffith

Curio - Cradle

May 7, 1937

Mr. V. R. Griffith
1404 South Walnut Street
Springfield, Illinois

My dear Mr. Griffith:

I certainly appreciate your letter of April 29 which reveals so clearly the fact that Margaret O'Herron deceived the public about various Lincoln curios which she claimed to have had in her possession.

I heartily agree with you in all that you say and will be very glad indeed to file your item on Lincoln's cradle with other information we have gathered about this woman.

Very truly yours,

LAW:EB

Director

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Springfield, Ill.
May 10, 1937

Mr. L.A. Warren,
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Dear Mr. Warren: Regret that I failed to look up my notes about M.O'Herron and the Lincoln cradle. A few days after writing you I did, and I have a correction to make: The man to whom Lincoln "willed the cradle" was M.O'Herron's grandfather, Patrick Keegan, her mother's father. From the Springfield newspaper, Sept. 1927, I obtained the name of the man who took the "cradle photograph—A.W. Kessberger, "the first man to photograph the original cradle of liberty," studio at 419½ E. Adams Street, who, I understand, is dead. M.O'Herron came to Springfield to give the cradle "to the state. But first Miss O'Herron wanted to obtain a picture of the relic;" so she went to Kessberger, who advised her to "display the cradle in the larger cities of the United States before it is placed on permanent exhibit," which she did, and was exposed in Wichita, Kan., when the Beacon investigated her story about being sent there by the St. Louis Red Cross for the tornado (1927) sufferers, who denied her assertion, etc.

March, 1930, I wrote Kessberger and asked about the cradle. His answer was that Margaret O'Herron was a "fake;" that "she certainly had a good story and cleverly worked up.... I am sorry if you bought the Cradle Photo for I am certain that the story she told is not true."

Also, I wrote "Mrs. L. Bailey,".... "old friends of the Lincolns, who lived at "Lincoln City, Ind." and had the cradle. "She was to keep the relic until he (Robert Todd Lincoln) died and then it (the cradle) was to go to Patrick Keegan." When Robert Todd Lincoln died, "Mrs. Bailey prepared to carry out the promise made several decades before." My letter to "Mrs. L. Bailey" came back. Also have a copy of a letter "Mrs. Bailey" is supposed to have written to Mrs. O'Herron, notifying her that the cradle was in her (Mrs. Bailey's) possession, when she made an investigation and found that she was "the only one of the Patrick Keegan's family living. I am insuring the cradle and sending direct to you from my home Pigeon Creek, Gentryville, Ind." The name was written "Mrs. L. Bailey." "Gentryville," as you know, became Lincoln City.

The clipping I have about the Gettysburg address ("original manuscript") is dated "Springfield, Ill., Aug. 6, 1932." It claims "Mrs. Margaret O'Herron of Streator announced the sale," etc.... She said it was given her by Robert T. Lincoln, son of the emancipator." So she came to Springfield a second time to dispose of "original" Lincoln relics!

Also, have a copy of the radio announcement that Margaret O'Herron sent over "Sears Roebuck Broadcasting Station,

Springfield, Ill., Sept. 22, 1927," telling how "Mrs. Anna O'Herron, 117 W. 3d. St. Streator, Ill.," came to possess a Lincoln relic; that "These articles will be on exhibition in all the larger cities in the U.S., after which they will be turned over to the State Park at Old Salem, near Springfield, Ill." Signed: "Mrs. L. Bailey." Regret I made the mistake in that Keegan was Margaret O'Herron's grandfather, and not her father. Memory is often fickle, and I seldom rely upon just "memory."

Sincerely

V. R. Griffith.

Enclose find "Lines To A Famous Mother," written a number of years ago and laid away to find them just in time for Mother's Day.

Curry Croyle

May 13, 1937

Mr. V. R. Griffith
Springfield, Illinois

My dear Mr. Griffith:

Thank you very much for your further comments upon the Margaret O'Herron claim.

The poems you sent with your letter I read with interest, especially inasmuch as I was at Lincoln City on Mother's Day and gave an address to some 500 Boy Scouts assembled at her grave.

We will be glad indeed to file your letter with other information about the O'Herrons, and also your poem in our poetry file.

Yours very truly,

LAW:EB

Director

